

29 January 2018

Mr Mark Elliott
Headteacher
Sturton CofE Primary School
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Sturton-le-Steeple
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Dear Mr Elliott

Short inspection of Sturton CofE Primary School

Following my visit to the school on 17 January 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in October 2013.

The school continues to be good.

The leadership has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You have focused particularly on developing the quality of teaching and learning and building a team of effective middle and senior leaders. As a result, teachers in the school share expertise to develop their skills and contribute well to training. Senior and middle leaders ensure that they monitor the impact of improvements carefully and are not afraid to adapt initial plans if the required impact is not achieved.

Pupils with whom I spoke are passionate about their school, feel safe and really enjoy coming to school. They find lessons interesting, they think the teachers are 'wonderful' and they particularly value learning and playing with their friends. Pupils' behaviour is a strength of the school as they are keen to achieve well and to develop their skills and understanding. Pupils listen well and are respectful of the views of others. They are not afraid to challenge inequality and are tolerant of differences.

Parents are almost unanimous in their positive views of the school. They are delighted with the quality of teaching and the varied trips and additional activities provided. Parents believe the school to be very well led and managed. They love the community atmosphere in the school, where the children all know each other and the older ones support the younger ones in so many ways, for example as a 'buddy' when children first start at the school.

The previous inspection report identified the need to raise the overall quality and consistency of teaching. This has been tackled and the leadership team now uses a range of evidence to ensure that teaching is good, including careful tracking of each individual pupil's progress, observations of teaching and an evaluation of each pupil's work. Action plans are written for any pupil who falls behind or who is identified as underachieving, so they can be helped to make even better progress. However, we discussed that there is still more work to do in order to ensure that all pupils achieve even better.

The previous inspection report also noted that there was a need to improve achievement in mathematics, by ensuring that pupils are provided with more opportunities to practise their numeracy and calculation skills in other subjects. The curriculum is broad and well balanced. It includes interesting topics which engage pupils well, so, for example, pupils are able to use graphs well in their topic work to display or extract information. They also readily use various calculations in science when undertaking experiments.

Safeguarding is effective.

The leadership team has ensured that all current safeguarding arrangements meet requirements and are fit for purpose. Records are carefully organised for efficient monitoring, and the checks made on safeguarding are a strength of the governing body's work. They regularly ensure that all requirements are in place by careful checking of the evidence. Improvements are made in order that the welfare of pupils is the best it can be. Staff receive good training and are vigilant about their role in safeguarding.

You place strong relationships at the heart of your work to ensure that children in the school are safe and staff work alongside parents and carers to ensure that they also are kept up to date with useful information. Recent training, which was also provided for parents, has ensured that all adults now have a better understanding of how to keep children safe while online. Your work to keep pupils safe is effective, including, where necessary, with external agencies.

Inspection findings

- My first line of enquiry for this inspection was to investigate how well the leadership had responded to the low attainment at the end of key stage 2 for the past two years. Published outcomes for the school also showed below-average progress in mathematics in 2017.
- Test outcomes for the pupils at the end of key stage 2 were fully analysed in order for leaders to determine which particular weaknesses in reading and mathematics had limited pupils' achievement. An effective plan of action was put into place across the whole school to improve pupils' inference skills in reading and their reasoning skills in mathematics, as it was realised that the outcomes were the result of less than good progress over time in these particular areas.
- Both the English and the mathematics leaders have delivered good-quality training for teachers and teaching assistants in the school. Changes have been

made to the way reading, writing and mathematics are taught in school, so there are now whole-school approaches. Leaders have then monitored the impact of the new approaches and the training. They have provided good-quality support for planning and teaching to ensure that new ideas have been embedded into lessons, resulting in much better progress being made by pupils. Current outcomes for pupils in Year 6 show above-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' work and the school's tracking of progress show that they are typically making at least good progress.

- My second line of enquiry related to standards and the progress pupils made across the school, including ensuring that the early years and phonic outcomes continue to be strong and that the most able pupils achieve well.
- Phonics continues to be a strength within the school. Children in the early years and pupils in Year 1 are typically able to read and spell words appropriately and often at levels beyond those expected for their age. Younger pupils confidently tackle new words in their reading and across the school pupils read widely and often. Pupils talk about a range of authors and books they have enjoyed, and comprehension work and internal tests show that their inference work is typically appropriate for their age.
- The tracking of pupils' progress has been strengthened. Detailed meetings include discussions about each child's progress. A range of tests are used to help teachers identify gaps in each pupil's knowledge and skills, so individual programmes to accelerate progress can be put into place and carefully monitored.
- We did discuss some underachievement of too many pupils in one age group in writing. These pupils have not been challenged sufficiently well or given sufficient opportunities to write at length. I know there are plans in place to enable these pupils to catch up.
- A current area identified by the school for improvement is that of reasoning in mathematics. While much training and work has been undertaken by teachers to improve this area, it is not yet consistently strong across the school, so remains an area for improvement.
- My final line of enquiry was about the effectiveness of the governing body. The school's website does not meet the legal requirements in relation to a number of aspects, including the school's admission arrangements, governors' attendance at meetings, the key stage 2 results and the information about the use of the pupil premium funding. However, governance in the school is improving and governors are now much better focused on checking the impact of the school's plans for improvement. They receive good-quality reports and presentations from senior and middle leaders to ensure that they have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are not afraid to challenge weaknesses, but also ensure that they support the leadership of the school well.
- The local authority only started to support the school in September 2017. While this support would have been more useful to the school one year earlier than it was given, the support has been of high quality. It has helped the school to rapidly improve in a number of areas, including self-evaluation, pupils' achievement and governance.

Next steps for the school

Leaders and those responsible for governance should ensure that:

- for the pupils identified, progress in writing is accelerated through raised expectations and regular opportunities to write at length, so they can develop the full range of required skills
- there is rigorous monitoring of the planned programme to develop pupils' reasoning skills in mathematics across the school, so that teachers fully understand how to teach this aspect well
- the school's website meets the legal requirements in all areas.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Southwell, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Nottinghamshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Kirk
Ofsted Inspector

Information about the inspection

During this inspection, you and I regularly met throughout the day. I also met with three senior and middle leaders, the local authority representative and three governors, including the chair and vice-chair. We conducted a number of tours of the school together, visiting all classes, some more than once. I looked at the quality of displays and looked at work in pupils' books. In the morning, I spoke informally with parents and also had various discussions with pupils. I spent time listening to some pupils read. The views of 28 parents, using the Ofsted online questionnaire, Parent View, were also considered. I also evaluated a range of documents provided by the school, including school improvement plans, reports of governors' visits, monitoring information and pupils' assessment outcomes.